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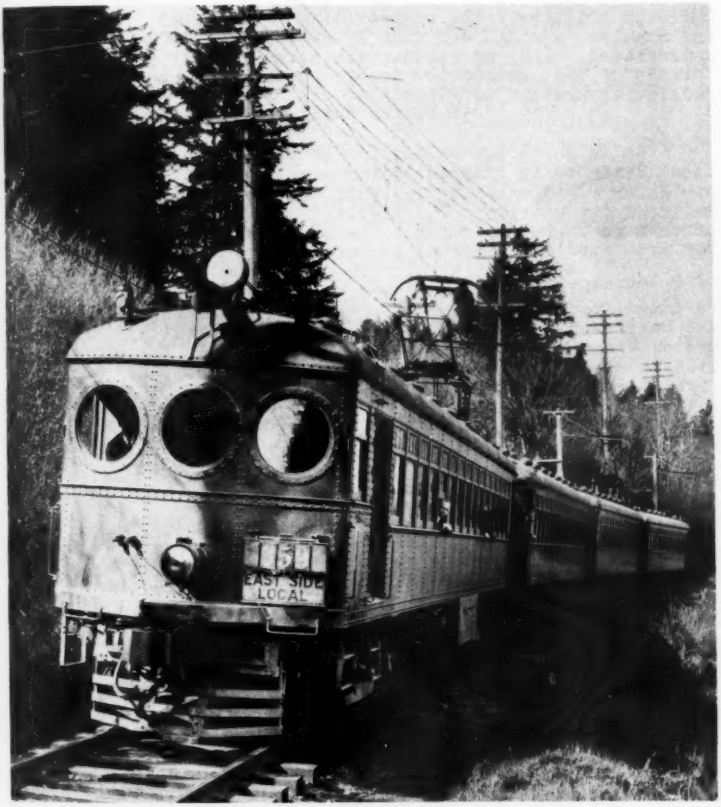
BAY AREA ELECTRIC RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

Ride the "Big Red Cars"

PACIFIC ELECTRIC
COMFORT-SPEED-SAFETY



"THE BIG RED CARS"

Portland's "Big Red Steel Cars" on the East Side Local headed by car 515, all steel combination car followed by two trailers and straight passenger motor. --- Addison Laflin Collection.

THE WESTERN RAILROADER

Vol. 12, No. 4 February, 1949 Issue 113

Bay Area Electric Railroad Association

Contents written by Addison Laflin. Paste-up and Production by Francis A Guido. Additonal copies have been printed for distribution as Issue 113, February 1948, Vol. 12, No. 4, of THE WESTERN RAILROAD, P.O. Box 668, San Mateo, California.

Credit for the trip should go to Arthur Lloyd, Excursion Director; Eddie Hansen, Bay Area Conductor; Vernon Sappers, Treasurer. For the tickets we are indebted to Harry Aitken and Bill Billings. The co-operation of RAILROAD BOOSTERS, Los Angeles, and RAILWAY CLUB OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA is most appreciated. And, of course, the attendance of members and friends of the Association is the backbone of success of any railfan excursion, so "Thanks to all."

--Dudley W Thickens, President

As we go to press, Key System Street Car 987 is just about ready to be shipped to Portland, Oregon. This is the car which was donated by the KSTL to the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association. The Portland Traction Company has offered to store the car for the Equipment Division of the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association.

The 987 will probably see service as No 4011 on the Portland Traction Company interurban lines between Portland and Bellrose and Oregon City. The 987 was built by the Key System Transit Company in 1927 as the 899. It the car makes good as an interurban the Portland Traction Company may buy five of the remaining KSTL 900s.

RAILFAN TRIPS FOR THIS SPRING

March 6 - Los Angeles - Ry Club of So. Cal. - "Mystery Trip" via Santa Fe - fare $5.00 - write club at P.O. Box 116, Highland Park Sta., Los Angeles 42.

March 13 - Los Angeles - repeat run of above trip

March 13 - San Francisco - C.N.R.H.S. - Monterey via Southern Pacific (note corrected date) - write Arthur Lloyd, 849 University Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

March 27 - San Francisco - R.& L.H.S. and B.A.E.R.A. - Key System tour in Shipyard Railway cars - write Stanley Merritt, 836 Alma Ave., Oakland, Calif.

April 9-10 - San Francisco - C.N.R.H.S. - Virginia & Truckee farewell excursion.- double overnight leaving Saturday evening returning Monday morning. Write Arthur Lloyd, address above.

June 18-19 - San Francisco - R.& L.H.S. - Eureka Trip over Northwestern Pacific - daylight trip both ways with overnight in Eureka. Write Stanley Merritt, address above.

July 1-2-3 Vancouver, B.C. - Pacific Great Eastern Boosters - P.G.E. tour - All expense about $50.00 from Vancouver write: 3226 East 26th Ave., Vancouver, B.C., Canada

THE STORY OF "THE BIG RED STEEL CARS" -- S.P. Electrics

By Addison H. Laflin, Jr.

First excursion with the interurban cars which are now known as the Portland motors of the Pacific Electric Railway was fittingly enough out of Portland, Oregon, on the newly electrified Yamhill and West Side Divisions of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Electrified under the auspices of the Portland, Eugene and Eastern Railway, these two divisions were also interesting in that their last steam passenger service was performed by locomotives which had been banished from Oakland by the earlier electrification of the Southern Pacific's Oakland, Alameda, and Berkeley Lines in 1911 and 1912.

The Portland Commercial Club, a noted organization of the Pacific Northwest, chartered the first electric train to run over the so-called McMinnville Loop out of Portland as the first electrified segment was called, Saturday, January 17, 1914. This PCC trip of yesteryear was unlike the PCC trips of today. Guests on this special train included railroad officials, city officials of the towns along the newly electrified route, prominent citizens, and newspaper men.

At each station stop, bands and oratory greeted the train of new big red cars. The speeches were concerned with the great development that was sure to follow the opening of of the electrified train service the following day. The next day, Sunday, January 18, 1914, the Portland, Eugene, and Eastern started their first regular electric service with thirty-six trains in and out of Portland every twenty-four hours. The Portland Union Depot was the terminal of the Portland, Eugene, and Eastern which a year later was to run under the Southern Pacific banner.

The electrified trackage left the Union Depot by way of Fourth Street, one of Portland's business streets. At Fourth and Jefferson, the Yamhill Division of the new electric loop was diverted to the west bank of the Willamette and followed that stream to Oswego and thence to St Joseph Junction, a point just north of McMinnville. The West Side Line continued south along Fourth Street to Hillsboro, Forest Grove to St Joseph Junction. From St Joseph Junction, one line of electric track extended to Whiteson Junction, a point four miles south of McMinnville. A temporary terminal yard was established at Whiteson Junction.

The Portland, Eugene, and Eastern represented the Southern Pacific's first experience with dual voltage DC equipment, for the cars took current at 600-volts in the City of Portland, while on the interurban portions of the line, they took current at 1500-volts DC. In some respects, the electrification was more advanced than the Pacific Electric's San Bernardino Line which was to be opened nearly six months later on July 11, 1914, and which is still a monument to this period of electric railway construction.

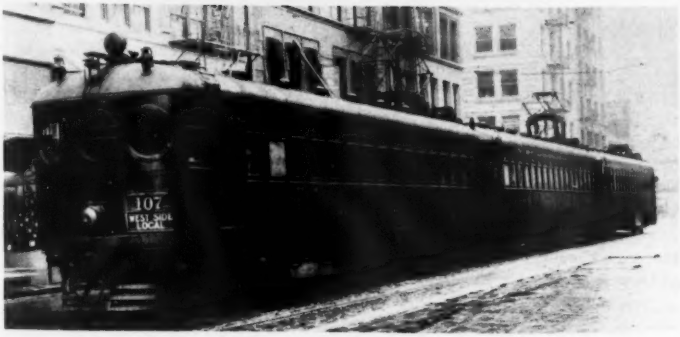
It was the original intention of the Southern Pacific to electrify all of its lines in Oregon's Willamette Valley except the main San Francisco-Portland route. In 1914, the Southern Pacific owned and operated the street car systems at Salem, Eugene, and Albany, and it was already planning to build a street car system in Corvallis.

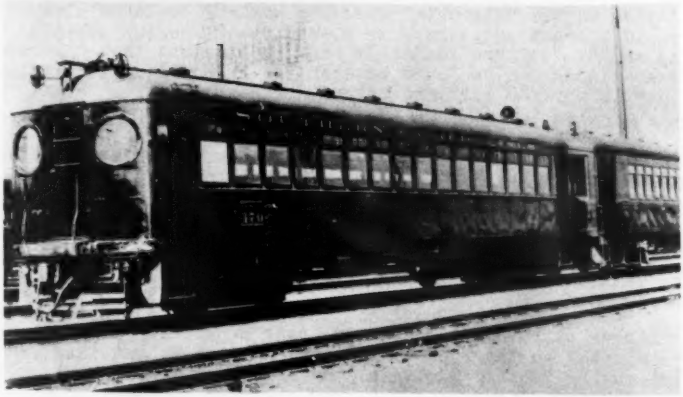
Among the other properties acquired as portions of the Portland, Eugene, and Eastern System were the West Side and Yamhill Divisions of the Southern Pacific between Portland and Corvallis; the Salem, Falls City, and Western Railway, the Sheridan and Willamina Railway, The Corvallis and Alsea Railway, and the Willamette Falls Railway which was reputed to be the first electric interurban ever constructed in the Pacific Northwest. This interurban which ran between West Oregon City and Willamette, a distance of six miles, was unusual in that it like the Southern Pacific's five-mile interurban line which ran between Eugene and Springfield was never connected with the rest of the Southern Pacific interurban trackage in Oregon. These two lines, by the way, had a 600-volt trolley, and the cars operated were more near the street car class than interurban. By 1916, the Southern Pacific operated street car lines in the following Oregon cities: Springfield, Salem, West Oregon City, Albany, and Eugene.

The Southern Pacific Portland electrification was the railroad's first experience with purchased power on a large scale. It might be mentioned here that the Southern Pacific interests' first experience with electric traction was the Oakland Railroad's Telegraph Avenue Line between Oakland and Berkeley and which was the first standard gauge electrified railway between the two cities. This pioneer line began its electric operations on January 4, 1893. Vice President of the Oakland Railroad was none other than Henry E. Huntington of Pacific Electric fame.

It is ironic that this line was sold to the Borax Smith interests whose Key Route was built to compete, with the Southern Pacific's steam lines in the East Bay District. This led the Southern Pacific to electrify its local lines in Oakland, Alameda, and Berkeley, and some of the cars built for this service are now seeing service on the Pacific Electric as 400's and 4600's. This 1911 electrification included a large steam power plant at Fruitvale. However, 3 years later, the Southern Pacific in electrifying its Portland suburban territory chose to buy its power from the Portland Railway Light and Power Company whose successor company runs the only remaining electric interurban lines in Oregon- the Oregon City and Bellrose Lines of the Portland Terminal and Railroad Division of the Portland Traction Company.

The Southern Pacific electric cars took their power in Portland directly from the street car power feeders. The wire was of the ordinary direct suspension type. However, outside the city and towns, the trolley wire as of the catenary type and was suspended from side brackets carried on Cedar poles. As stated before, 1500-volts DC was the voltage on the interurban sections, while 600-volts DC was the rule in the city. The cars were equipped so that they could operate at full speed on either voltage, and the changeover could be made while the train was in motion.





The Southern Pacific's "Big Red Steel Cars" in Oregon Top View: East Side Local near Portland headed by RPO 772, now Pacific Electric 1406. Middle Picture: West Side Local on Fourth Street, Portland. Lower Photo: The 470 at Oakland, California--now Pacific Electric 1256. Upper and Lower Pictures: Courtesy of Francis A Guido; center: W. C.Whittaker.

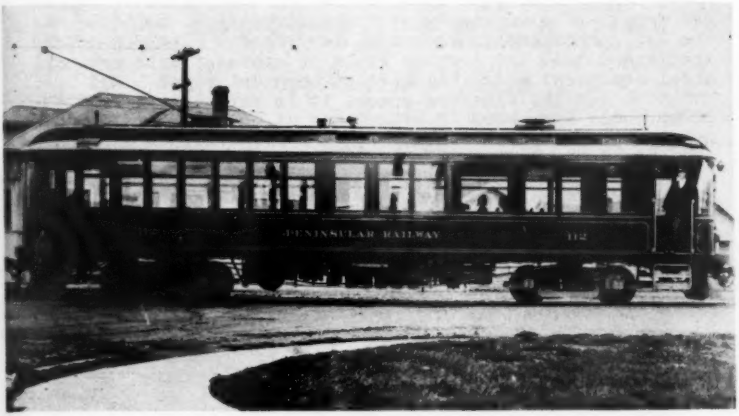
For a short time, a few of the Portland cars were operated in experimental service on the Oakland-Alameda- and Berkeley Lines of the Southern Pacific. One trailer, the470 was used on the Oakland 18th Street Line which was built as the Peninsular Railway. Only monument to the Oakland 18th Street Line which was discontinued in 1933 are the street lights along the route which are still maintained and operated by the Southern Pacific. This line was further noteworthy in that the franchise required the use of Eclipse Fenders which until very recently were required on Pacific Electric trains in Los Angeles. As a matter of fact, the Portland city street operation was not unlike that of the PE in downtown Los Angeles. However, fenders were not used on the cars when operated in Portland.

Except for a half-hearted trial in Oakland, the Portland cars saw no other electric operation outside on what was to have been an extensive Oregon interurban system save for the Pacific Electric. Southern Pacific's Portland operations had competition like the Oakland electrification in the form of the Oregon Electric Railway which did go all the way to Eugene. In Oakland, the Southern Pacific's big red trains competed with the wooden orange cars of the Key Route. While the Oregon Electric's cars were of wooden construction, they were painted Pullman Green. But as the Key and the Oregon Electric can't be classed as similar, neither could the Southern Pacific's Oakland Electrification be compared with that in Portland.

The Portland Eugene and Eastern was a true interurban, while the SP Oakland Electric Lines which were to be later styled as the Interurban Electric Railway could be classed as rapid transit or perhaps as electrified suburban service. It is on The Southern Pacific's Pacific Electric that some comparisons can be found between the PE and E and the PE, and that is why the Portland motors are still running out of Los Angeles today.

The standard cars are what are now termed as Portland motors on the Pacific Electric. However, in Portland these cars were equipped with US Roller Pantagraphs. These pans did not pan out so well, so that later the company placed them on built-up platforms. At the end of the electric service in 1927, the slider pan had replaced the rollers but the pan stand was still being used.

As operated in Portland, the cars were equipped with continous buffers and standard Janney couplers. The airgong was mounted on the roof. When these cars were put into service on the Pacific Electric, the air gongs were removed and the standard PE overhead gong was substituted. Westinghouse full automatic air and electric tight-lock couplers which made all electric and air connections replaced the couplers used in Portland and did away with the air hoses and electric jumpers. The standard PE trolleys replaced the pans. It is interesting to note that many of the Portland electric cars were used as gas-electric trailers on various SP runs, while some found their way to the Northwestern Pacific and into caboose service.



Peninsular Railway 112, now Pacific Electric 1056, will be used on today's run to Glendora. Courtesy R. C. Brandt

Unlike the Portland, Eugene, and Eastern, the San Bernardino Line of the Pacific Electric did not represent the electrification of an existing steam line, but rather the extension of an existing electric line.

When the Pacific Electric decided to connect its unconnected electric lines in and around San Bernardino, it chose to extend its already existing Covina Line. This line had a 600-volt trolley and was operated with cars of the 400 class which were later renumbered into the 800-series.

Contrary to the early practice of the Pacific Electric the San Bernardino extension was built along the county roads and very little land was obtained for a right-of-way. This was a far cry from the Huntington era where the electric had blazed the way for the roads. Some Southern Pacific track was also electrified as part of the new extension.

When the opening day for the San Bernardino Line arrived, the steel cars especially built for the line had not. The Pacific Electric had had plans for wooden cars for use on this line, and they were just about ready to grant a contract for their construction when one of those things that railroad officials don't like to talk about took place at Vineyard. Due to this accident, the worst in the history of Pacific Electric's Western Division, plans for further wood cars were cancelled , and the Pressed Steel Car Company of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was awarded the contract to build the 24 all-steel cars for service on the new San Bernardino extension.

When the Pressed Steel Car Company set to build the first twenty-four 1200's of the PE, it used a cast steel under frame and other heavy steel construction. In 1914, when the San Bernardino Line opened, the Pacific Electric proudly proclaimed that the service would be operated with new all-steel equipment which had not yet been delivered. Had it not been for the Vineyard wreck, it is very likely that wood 1200s would have been in attendance at the driving of the Silver Spike in San Bernardino, July 11, 1914, on the formal opening of the Pacific Electric's longest Line.

Mayor H. H. Rose of Los Angeles and Acting Mayor Claude R. Davidson of San Bernardino used silver-plated hammers to drive the solid silver spike into an orangewood tie which had been donated by local chambers of commerce for the event which was attended by 20,000 persons. The first regular service consisted of ten two-car trains daily in each direction. These cars were rebuilt for the long run and many of them have gone--the Pacific Electric 1000-class. A year later, a car of this type was to be exhibited at the 1915 Fair in San Francisco--the Peninsular Railway 112 which is now Pacific Electric's 1056.

The new San Bernardino Line used a 1200-volt trolley which was new to the Pacific Electric. The PE 1000's were arranged to operate on both 600 and 1200-volts DC. It may be mentioned here that the Peninsular Railway of Blossom Trolley Trip Fame was also contemplating 1200-volt operation when it acquired the 112. However, the 112 never saw 1200-volt operation on the Peninsular Railway, and it is unlikely that this car as 1056 was operated on the only PE 1200-volt section. Early plans for cars of the Peninsular 112-class were to run between San Francisco and San Jose, but the 112 fresh from the PE paint shops was the only Peninsular Ry car to reach San Francisco, and today is the only PE woodencar to have ever been in that city.

The Westinghouse full-automatic tight-lock coupler now standard on all the Pacific Electric's big interurban steels made its original appearance on the San Bernardino 1200s in 1916 when these cars went into service. The success of the coupler led the Southern Pacific to adopt it years later on its Oakland-Alameda-Berkeley Lines (Interurban Electric) and the Northwestern Pacific--both gone, but not forgotten electric lines of the San Francisco Bay Area.

With the opening of the new San Bernardino Line came the Orange Empire Trolley Trip. Around San Bernardino, this sightseeing excursion took in more trackage than is possible today. To get down to concrete examples, this $4.00 trip of yesteryear passed at Crestmore, one of the largest and most completely equipped cement plants in the world. Such Orange Empire Cities as Redlands and Riverside are now beyond the wire.

The famous Orange Empire Trolley Trip left Main Steet at 9:00 am on Wednesdays and Sundays. For today's train, we we have taken the name "Citrus Belt Limited"--a train which left Los Angeles Main Street Station at 4:35 pm when the San Bernardino Line was the pride of the system. The train in the opposite direction was called the "Angel City Limited" These two trains seem to have been the only name trains in the Pacific Electric fleet.